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# TRAINING FOR THE HOME SERVICE OF THE RED CROSS

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At the outbreak of war, the home service of the Red Cross assumed the task of dealing directly and individually with the families of soldiers and sailors, in those matters of finance, counsel and skilled service concerning which they might wish its assistance. It was evident at the outset, that the fighting forces of the United States might be numbered by millions, most of them attached to families potentially in need of home service. The Red Cross at the time had no adequate equipment for the task. The number of trained workers in the field of social work for families and individuals had been steadily growing; but even by drafting such workers in the largest possible numbers from the organizations to which they were attached, the Red Cross would still lack a sufficient force. It became necessary to supplement the staff secured by this form of draft, with a much larger group of workers especially trained for home service.

In planning a comprehensive training scheme three definite factors had to be reckoned with. First, the urgent need for workers made it necessary to keep the period of training as brief as was consistent to the maintenance of a reasonable standard. Second, successful training for work of this kind has been found to involve a combination of practical class work and field work, under expert guidance, facilities for both of which are available only in a comparatively limited number of places. Third, the need for home service was sure to be as wide-spread as the population of the country, even if facilities for training were not: training courses might be set up where satisfactory facilities could be found, but since other places required workers, it would be necessary to recognize less ambitious efforts to equip them. In other words, it was necessary to set a standard of training which could be approached in a group of specially organized courses, distributed over the country, and to recognize for the time being that in addition to these, local courses

would be maintained by local chapters. These latter might be influenced at least by this standard even if they could not reach it. The specially organized course, given the name of Home Service Institute, representing the standard training of the home service worker, has been controlled by the National Headquarters of the Red Cross. The local course known as the Chapter Course has been controlled by the local chapter.

#### THE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS OF HOME SERVICE

The term "training" implies a definite task, the nature of which determines what the training should be. It requires no analysis to visualize the kind of human interest and material benefits which a nation, emotionally aroused, would like to make available for those whom its fighting men leave behind them. Once the task of bringing this interest to bear upon the persons affected is undertaken, however, it is found to bristle with difficulties which spell humiliation and disaster unless the person undertaking it knows how to handle these difficulties. These difficulties are not related alone to the problems of daily bread. They are frequently stubborn problems of business: the adjustment of insurance or benefits; the complicated matter of legal rights; the meeting of financial obligations; the carrying on of business. They are frequently baffling problems of home administration: the discipline and guidance of children; the family budget; responsibility for household decisions in which the absent member has been a factor. They are frequently the subtle but soul-wearying problems of adjusting the mind and spirit to a round of living from which one dominating personality has been removed. Every sort of family crisis, from birth to death, has been described to the home service worker with an implied or direct appeal for the suggestion, the sympathy or the concrete service which would lighten it.

These home problems which the war created are the familiar problems of disorganized family life in meeting which social agencies in America have developed increasing skill. The experience of such agencies offered a source of sound methods and principles for dealing with them. Indeed, when the Civilian Relief department of the Red Cross took over large numbers of workers from such social agencies, it insured the application of these methods and principles to its own task. Work with the families of soldiers and sailors,

however, was from the first placed upon a unique basis, in that such families, as a group requiring social services, were marked not by dependence but by the fact of their own supreme contribution to the welfare of the nation. Their needs were familiar human needs which could be met in specific ways, by those who knew how to meet them; but they could not for a moment be treated as objects of charity. The training of home service workers, therefore, was a training in the established methods and principles of social work and of their application to a new, homogeneous social group.

### THE PROGRAM OF THE HOME SERVICE INSTITUTE

The history of the training of skilled workers in any field shows a steady lengthening of the period of training. This is true of medicine, nursing and engineering, for example. This experience has been repeated in social work, for which two year courses of training are now offered in several American schools. Undoubtedly such a course, modified to meet the peculiar requirements of home service, offers the best possible training for this purpose. To meet the urgent need for workers, however, it was decided to set up a short course which would cover as thoroughly as possible the fundamentals of social work with families, omitting everything except those features, which were essential as a foundation, upon which a worker might later build his own further training out of his own experience. This plan of abbreviated training was embodied in the Home Service Institute, the first series of which were started in October, 1917.

The institute provides for a six weeks' course taking the full time of students. It is divided into two parts, approximately twenty-four hours spent in class work which follows a prepared syllabus, and approximately one hundred and fifty hours spent in field work, in which the student has actual experience in dealing with disorganized families under competent supervision. The topics covered by the syllabus are as follows:

1. The Organization and Administration of the Red Cross.
2. The Field of Home Service.
3. The Fundamental Methods of Home Service.
4. The Unstable Family.
5. The Racial Equation.
6. The Use of Financial Assistance.
7. The War Risk Insurance Law.

8. Health.
9. Home Economics.
10. Child Welfare.
11. Employment of Women and Children.
12. Re-education and Re-adjustment of the Disabled.
13. The Personal Factor in Dealing with Disorganized Families.
14. Community Resources for Home Service.
15. The Use of Other Agencies in Home Service.
16. Qualifications and Responsibilities of the Home Service Worker.<sup>1</sup>

The field work which in every instance is done in connection with a regularly established agency for dealing with families, is intended to give the students a first-hand knowledge of the problems of disorganized family life, training in making helpful contacts, familiarity with the resources of the community and the conditions upon which they can be used, and some insight into the routine of an organization.

Those who complete the work of an institute, are awarded a certificate by the National Headquarters of the Red Cross. The award is based upon the work in class, which is tested by examination and by the quality of the field work, as shown by the applicant's ability to take increasingly heavy responsibility in dealing with families. The field work of the students has usually been done partly in a family agency and partly in a home service section.

#### A YEAR'S EXPERIENCE WITH HOME SERVICE INSTITUTES

On May 28, 1918, forty-four institutes had been completed. One or more had been held in each of the following cities: with a few exceptions they were conducted in affiliation with a university or a school for the training of social workers:

Atlanta, Georgia	Dallas, Texas
Baltimore, Maryland	Denver, Colorado
Birmingham, Alabama	Indianapolis, Indiana
Boston, Massachusetts	Los Angeles, California
Cincinnati, Ohio	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Chicago, Illinois	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Cleveland, Ohio	New Orleans, Louisiana
Columbia, South Carolina	New York City, New York
Columbus, Ohio	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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<sup>1</sup> Limitation of space forbids an elaboration here of the content of these topics. Those who wish such an elaboration are referred to a recent number of *The Annals* on "Social Case Work."

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
 Portland, Oregon  
 Richmond, Virginia  
 St. Louis, Missouri

San Francisco, California  
 Seattle, Washington  
 Springfield, Illinois  
 Washington, D. C.

The geographical distribution of these institutes is significant, for they have reached all sections of the country. In most instances the institutes have been repeated, and the plan involves a continuing series of them in practically every city where they have been established, and where experience shows that satisfactory facilities for conducting them can be secured.

Something of the achievement of the institutes is indicated by the following data which was compiled as of May 27, 1918:

Number of Students registered .....	742
Number of Students graduated .....	607
Number of Students sent officially by chapters .....	78
Number of Students from Institute city .....	290
Number of Students with college education or equivalent .....	123
Number of Students with high school or equivalent .....	148
Number of Students with normal school education .....	23
Number of Students with grammar school only .....	5
Number of Students with previous social service experience. ....	17
Number of Students with other previous professional experience .	22
Number of Graduates in volunteer work .....	144
Number of Graduates in salaried work .....	54

The institutes in session as this article is prepared will graduate enough students to bring the total for the first year, which ends in October, well over one thousand.

The work of the institutes has been made possible by the ready and efficient coöperation of those who were invited by the Red Cross to conduct them. The directors of the institutes in every instance have been either college teachers of social economy or sociology, or social workers with experience in training new workers. For many of them, the institute represented a new type of instruction which was added to their regular duties; for all of them, whether accustomed to the training of social workers or not, it involved modifications in their customary teaching practices. This service they have rendered gratuitously to the Red Cross. The field work of each institute has been provided by established social agencies, such as charity organization societies, and by home service sections. It also has been arranged for without charge.

The administration of the institute plan has been in the hands of two national directors of home service institutes, who have been responsible for the organization of institutes and for the maintenance of standards of instruction. It was recognized that the requirements of different sections of the country and the different academic experiences of the directors of institutes, would necessitate considerable flexibility in the actual program outlined. To permit this and at the same time to definitely indicate the ground which must be covered, the Syllabus of Instruction was prepared, with a detailed development of each topic and copious references to source material.

In limiting the membership of the institutes to twenty-five students, the Red Cross authorities had in mind the necessity of making the most out of the short time available. This seemed to be as large a group as could receive the desirable amount of individual attention from the director and the supervisor of field work. In recruiting the membership, it was found necessary in many instances to select from a much larger group which had applied for admission. This has been especially true of the later institutes, which may be taken as evidence that the plan is succeeding by the acid test of experience. Local chapters are finding that institute graduates have an equipment for home service which is worth the time and money required to secure it.

In selecting the membership from those who apply, consideration has been given both to the qualifications of candidates and to the needs of the communities from which they come. The selection has been made, in consultation with the division directors of civilian relief who have been able to advise as to the communities where workers were most needed. Much time and patient effort has been expended in many such communities, to persuade the local Red Cross authorities that to send a representative to an institute, would pay dividends in better service to the families in whom they are interested.

If the class work alone of an institute were its most important factor, it would be possible to establish one wherever a teaching institution competent to follow the syllabus could be found. The field work, however, has from the first been reckoned as the more important. Therefore institutes have been established only where satisfactory field work could be secured. Field work as conceived

in the institute plan, is something more than mere experience in dealing with disorganized families. It is such experience planned, supervised and interpreted by a competent worker. It requires well organized work, a sufficient number of families under treatment to keep students busy, and workers qualified to train. Obviously, facilities for field work for twenty-five students each devoting approximately twenty-five hours a week to it, can only be provided in larger cities. This fact puts a definite limit on the extension of institute centers.

A modification of the institute plan has been worked out in a few colleges, where a selected group of students, usually seniors, have followed the institute syllabus under instruction, usually taking a full semester of fifteen weeks for the purpose. They have then arranged to do the required amount of field work during the summer vacation, in some agency approved by the Red Cross. Upon completion of the class work and the field work they are eligible for a college course certificate.

#### CHAPTER COURSES IN HOME SERVICE

Practically every chapter of the Red Cross is using volunteers in its home service. The number of volunteers in a few chapters run into hundreds. As the maximum number of institutes in operation at any one time, each training twenty-five students, has been twenty-six, it has obviously not been possible to meet the entire demand for trained workers in this way. It is also true, that despite the effort to distribute the institutes widely, many sections of the country are remote from the nearest one. A few cities, also, have found it possible to arrange for their own training of volunteers.

To meet this demand for local training, chapter courses have been recognized. They have been organized and controlled entirely by the local chapters, although the national and division headquarters have stimulated them and have rendered all possible assistance. These chapter courses have followed no such definite standard of instruction as have the institutes. Under the influence of the divisional headquarters, however, they have tended to become more and more substantial. The teaching material prepared for the institutes, including the syllabus, has been available for them, and in some divisions instructors have been provided by headquarters. In some instances the standard of instruction in class has been as high

as that in the institutes, although chapter courses usually cover less ground and do not include as much of the indispensable field work. One division reports sixty-eight such courses having been held up to May, 1918, with a total registration of 1,820.

The most immediate and important result of this plan has been a substantially higher standard of service to the families of soldiers and sailors, than would have been possible without it. Its hurried launching made it inevitable that it would have to develop by experience. Six weeks is at best a morsel of time in which to prepare inexperienced persons for the delicate task of understanding and influencing troubled lives with which they have no natural contact. The experience of the year has revealed wide variations in the use which different institutes have made of the time allotted, and the training program outlined. Nevertheless, the evidence is abundant, that those who have taken the training offered have gone to the work of home service with a clearer understanding, a surer touch, a wider resourcefulness and a more effective gift of helpfulness than they could have had without it. It has been impressed upon the members of institutes, that they have not qualified as completely trained workers in six weeks. Rather they have had revealed to them what it means to be a trained worker, and along what lines they must think and act in order to complete their training as they acquire experience.

Those who have been close to this experiment in training for social work, come to have a profound belief that it will lead to a wider acceptance of the importance of training for all forms of social work, and to the more rapid development of material and facilities for giving it. Faith in training for social work has been none too widespread in this country. The Home Service of the Red Cross has revealed to a multitude of persons fired with the zeal for service, that zeal, knowledge and proficiency are not the same things. To combine them effectively, requires preparation under the guidance of those who have learned through their own training, whether formal or otherwise, to do so. That which can be done, the uninitiated with the right natural qualifications can be taught to do. Recognition of this fact in the field of social work was never so general as now.